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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 DOHA 000791

SIPDIS

G/TIP PLEASE PASS TO AMBASSADOR LAGON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [ELAB](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR AMBASSADOR MARK LAGON'S VISIT TO  
QATAR

REF: A. DOHA 675  
[1](#)B. MUSCAT 732

Classified By: Amb. Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy Doha welcomes your visit to Qatar. We have requested meetings with Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser Al Thani, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Dr. Sultan Bin Hassan al-Dhabit al-Dousari, Minister of State for International Cooperation and Conferences Dr. Khalid Al Attiyah, General Secretary of the National Human Rights Committee Dr. Ali Bin Samikh Al Marri, Coordinator of the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons Dr. Miriam Al Malki, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director of Human Rights Sheikh Khalid Al Thani. Your visit comes as we are establishing a cooperative dialogue with the Government of Qatar on how to better address Qatar's Tier 3 TIP ranking and presents an excellent opportunity to strengthen U.S.-Qatar engagement on this issue.

[1](#)2. (C) Below we provide the Country Team's views on how your visit can best advance the U.S. Government's strategic objectives in Qatar. We also discuss the key strategic trends in the bilateral relationship over the coming three years. We start, however, with a brief review of the bilateral relationship.

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THE U.S.-QATAR RELATIONSHIP  
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[1](#)3. (C) The breadth and depth of Qatar's relationship with The U.S. is impressive, especially for a country the size of Connecticut, with only 1.7 million inhabitants, of whom only about 225,000 are actually Qatari citizens.

-- Because it is so small and its energy resources so large, Qatar now has an annual per capita income of over \$60,000. Even through the current global financial crisis, Qatar's national revenues will continue growing, and Qatar should soon have the highest per capita income in the world.

-- That wealth has fueled the lightening-fast economic development that is behind Qatar's growing TIP problem - hundreds of thousands of foreign workers have been brought in to build Qatar's infrastructure and staff its institutions, and work in Qataris' homes.

-- Vast wealth has also bolstered the country's political ambitions, leading to Qatari foreign policy initiatives that too often been at odds with U.S. objectives. Examples include Qatar's relations with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Sudan.

-- The U.S.-Qatar military relationship is extremely important. Qatar provides the U.S. military exceptional

access to two major Qatari military installations, Al Udaid Air Base and Camp As-Saliyeh - perhaps CENTCOM's most important operating installations outside of Iraq. Qatar charges us no rent, and in fact is funding over \$700 million in construction projects for the exclusive use of the U.S. military.

-- The U.S.-Qatar economic relationship is vital. U.S. energy companies have invested tens of billions of dollars in the oil and gas industry here. Qatar, which holds the third largest natural gas reserves in the world after Iran and Russia, is expected to become in 2009 one of the most important suppliers of imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the U.S. market.

-- Our educational and cultural relationship with Qatar is strong and growing. Qatar has committed itself like few other Arab states to modernizing its educational system, and has turned decisively to the United States for help. Qatar has imported branch campuses of six U.S. universities, including Texas A&M, Carnegie-Mellon, Weill-Cornell Medical School, Georgetown, Virginia Commonwealth, and Northwestern. At the elementary and secondary levels it is instituting a U.S. model of charter schools.

-- Al Jazeera, the television network with an Arabic-speaking audience of some 60 million, is based on Qatar and funded by the Amir. The network's biased coverage, particularly of issues important to the U.S., has long been an irritant in our bilateral relationship. We nevertheless recognize the value of appearing on Al Jazeera in order to ensure that official U.S. voices are heard in the Arab world. Because it

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is funded by the Amir, Al Jazeera avoids reporting critical of Qatar. In a few cases, however, they have broadcast stories that discuss the TIP problem in the Gulf, including in Qatar.

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TIP IN QATAR: THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT  
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14. (C) Qatar's population has doubled over the past five years. As many as 1.6 million of the estimated 1.7 to 1.8 million population is of foreign origin. These numbers are expected to grow among every nationality and region of origin, checked only by Qatari security concerns about certain nationalities, such as Pakistanis and Iranians.

-- (C) Qataris constitute only 8-12% of the population. As the foreign population grows, Qataris will become a smaller minority in their own country despite a relatively high birth rate. Qatar is not expected to increase the size of its citizen population by easing restrictions on naturalization in the near future.

-- (SBU) South Asians from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan account for an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 of the expatriate population and work in a variety of sectors, including construction, import/export, labor, business, and information technology. Because their numbers are so large, and their jobs tend to arrive as unskilled or semi-skilled workers, it is among these communities that the majority of the TIP problems occur.

-- (SBU) Several Arab countries' nationals have a major presence in Qatar, including Egypt, Palestine (typically long-term residents), Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, and Syria. Expatriate Arabs constitute an estimate 300,000 to 400,000 of the population. They tend to work in engineering, accounting, import/export, education, energy, services, hotels, and beauty.

-- (SBU) An estimated 200,000 East Asians live in Qatar. They are mainly from the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, South

Korea, and China. East Asians are prominent in the fields of mechanical technology, energy, construction, engineering, housekeeping, and labor.

-- (SBU) There are as many as 40,000 Africans living in Qatar. They come from Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and South Africa. African expatriates work mainly in construction, labor, trade, import/export, energy, and oil services.

-- (SBU) Europeans account for an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 of the expatriate population. They are generally citizens of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, and Turkey. Europeans work in energy, shipping, engineering, construction, management, education, finance, and investment.

-- (SBU) An estimated 5,000 to 12,000 expatriates from North and South America (excluding the U.S.) reside in Qatar. They are mainly from Canada, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia. These individuals work in energy, oil field services, education, and for Qatar Airways.

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PARTNERING WITH QATAR AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
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15. (C) TIP remains one of the most persistent social ills in Qatar and a major area where the bilateral relationship can founder. A major U.S. imperative in Qatar is to raise awareness on TIP, and human rights issues generally, and to find ways to shape public attitudes and government policies. We have begun to set up a closer working relationship on TIP issues with the Qatar government and look to strengthen it further with your help. Our overarching goal is to set up an effective Embassy-GOQ mechanism to actively address Qatar's TIP Tier 3 Rating and improve it.

-- (C) On September 11, Ambassador met with Minister of State for International Cooperation and Conferences Dr. Khalid Al Attiyah, a former Chairman of the National Human Rights Committee. They agreed to forge a more cooperative relationship on the issue of human trafficking. The Embassy hopes that by working with Qatari officials in a spirit of confidence and cooperation, we can gain a better understanding of the situation and better advise them of how

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to address this issue. Dr. Al Attiyah has been exercising his influence to open doors for the Embassy's labor and human rights officer, and while our relationship with some of the authorities remains strained, the new approach has already paid dividends in the preparation of the 2008 Human Rights Report.

16. (C) There are two primary reasons that our engagement with Qataris on TIP issues is so difficult. First, Qataris primarily see these issues through the prism of national security given their small numbers relative to the overwhelming size of the migrant population. Talking to them about guest workers in terms of human rights seldom is the right approach. We have more success when we acknowledge that Qataris are concerned about maintaining control of their country, its culture, and political institutions. It is important to bear in mind as well that, other than the exploitation of domestic workers in Qatari homes, most Qataris are personally removed from the majority of the abuse that occurs here. It is third country nationals overseeing the day-to-day management of expatriate workers -- sometimes of the same national origin -- who carry out most of the abuse. Convincing Qataris that giving foreign workers a stake in the country -- not necessarily citizenship, which is inconceivable at present -- is in their long-term interest will require long-term, sustained engagement. Part of this engagement requires giving Qataris tools to master their own land when the vast majority of residents are non-Qatari.

¶17. (C) Second, Qatari officials engaged with us on these issues have the perception that the goal posts move with each passing year. For example, the most recent TIP report contains global language on sex abuse towards children which is tangential to the main TIP problems here and was never raised with the GOQ prior to the report's publication. They are also indignant that we don't give them credit for what they are trying to do on the road toward tangible results. Looking back, Qataris expected applause and respect for its decision to ban juvenile camel jockeys and instead, from their perspective, saw their TIP rating fall and more conditions expected of the government.

¶18. (C) Qatari officials often tell us that they don't know where our end game lies. In this vein, you should be prepared to discuss the recent decision to upgrade Oman's TIP rating from Tier 3 to Tier 2 watchlist based upon the expected passage of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation there (see ref B). In our discussions with our Qatari counterparts, we have consistently stressed that Tier rankings are based upon concrete measures, not the promise of future action. The texts of the 2008 TIP Report dealing with Oman and Qatar are virtually identical, and the Qataris may cite the decision as an unfair "moving of the goal posts."

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HOW YOUR VISIT CAN ADVANCE THIS STRATEGIC GOAL  
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¶19. (C) Our Qatari counterparts complain that the annual TIP Report does not accurately reflect the reality here in the country, in particular that it does not reflect their efforts to combat human trafficking. They know that it is essential for them to communicate with the Embassy more closely, and have responded favorably to our outreach efforts. You can thank them for this positive response and encourage them to strengthen their lines of communication with the Embassy in the future.

¶10. (C) You should encourage your interlocutors to continue their efforts to enforce compliance with existing labor laws. Expatriate laborers in Qatar still work under very difficult conditions, but we are beginning to see encouraging signs that the situation is improving. Our counterparts from many of the labor sending countries report improved relations with the Qatari authorities and that there are better conditions at the Deportation Center. More businesses are being sanctioned for violating laws governing working conditions. While these sanctions are generally administrative, and it is still too early to identify a solid trend, we encourage you to recognize these achievements and ask the Qataris to strengthen their efforts in the future.

¶11. (C) You should inquire as to the status of the revised labor law currently pending before the Advisory Council (see ref A) and offer our technical expertise. The Advisory Council opened its new session on November 4 and is expected to consider the matter soon. There is an ongoing debate

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within the Qatari ruling elite over how to approach these reforms. One group maintains that the presence of hundreds of thousands of foreign laborers is a national security matter. A competing, yet smaller, group believes that the importation of foreign labor is an economic and legal matter and therefore should be managed through the application of economic and legal principles, chief among them the sanctity of contract. While the draft law is not as strict as we would like, the fact that they are considering changes to the legal structure of their labor importation system is an encouraging sign.  
LeBaron